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September 27, 2007

The Honorable George Miller
United States Congressman
2205 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0507

Dear Congressman Miller:

On behalf of the state of Alaska, I am writing to express my displeasure with your introduction of a bill that proposes to end what you refer to as "airborne hunting" of wolves and bears in Alaska. You have misconstrued the reality of life in Alaska and the importance of wild game as food to the people of this state. You displayed a shocking lack of understanding of wildlife management in the North and the true structure and function of Alaska's predator control programs. You have threatened the very foundations of federalism and the states' abilities to manage their own affairs as they see fit.

I am dismayed that you did not attempt to contact the state your bill affects most directly before announcing your legislation. At the very least, we could have helped you correct the many inaccuracies and misstatements of fact in both the written and the oral portions of your media presentation yesterday.

For example, Alaska's wildlife management programs are conducted entirely within the tenets of the Airborne Hunting Act, as the annual reports we file with the U.S. Department of the Interior clearly demonstrate. Predator control is not hunting; it is a carefully prescribed directed management action. Airborne hunting is illegal. Our science-driven and abundance-based predator management program enlists volunteers permitted to use aircraft to kill some predators in specified areas of the state where we are trying to increase opportunities for Alaskans to put healthy food on their families' dinner tables.

I am especially concerned your draft bill threatens the constitutionally guaranteed sovereignty not just of the state of Alaska, but all states. Under our system of federalism, fish and game management is generally conducted by the states, not the

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federal government. Courts have repeatedly recognized wildlife management as one of the aspects of traditional state sovereignty reserved to the states under the Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

Federal powers to regulate wildlife are limited and seldom result in broad, area-wide effective management strategies, but Alaska's fish and game management programs have been widely recognized for their excellence and effectiveness. Alaska, alone among the states, has managed its wildlife so that we still maintain abundant populations of all of our indigenous predators almost fifty years after statehood. Your proposal to limit this effective management program to addressing only biological emergencies caused by irreversible declines of important moose or caribou herds is an unworkable and unwarranted interference with time-honored principles of federalism and with effective state programs. If a decline is irreversible, it is by definition unresolvable by deploying management tools. That may be acceptable to you, but I cannot allow wildlife management challenges to deteriorate to unsolvable levels.

Alaska's predator control program is mandated by the Alaska State Legislature, regulated by the independent Alaska Board of Game, and implemented by the world-renowned scientists at our Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Our state constitution requires wildlife to be managed on the sustained yield principle, subject to preferences among beneficial uses. When game population or harvest goals are not met, Alaska's intensive management law mandates action, including habitat improvement and/or predator control.

Our state biologists use radio tracking, visual surveys, and numerous other scientifically proven methods to assess the health of wildlife populations. Often, predators keep prey populations lower than the area habitat could support. In most states, wildlife populations are limited primarily by habitat; in many parts of Alaska, however, moose and caribou are prevented from reaching abundant levels by heavy predation. Wolves and bears are powerful and effective predators; these predators kill far more moose and caribou than do humans hunting for food.

Our science-based program is designed to reduce the effect of predators in given areas with the intent to allow a higher harvest of moose and caribou by humans for food. By thinning the numbers of predators in selected areas, we are enabling more Alaskans to hunt moose and caribou and put food in their freezers. Each program is specifically designed, carefully considered, and closely monitored. We do not undertake predator control lightly.

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Predator control is not hunting. Fair chase ethics do not apply. The notion that it is "unsportsmanlike" is simply not applicable. To participate, Alaskans must qualify for permits to shoot on the same day they fly, and, in some cases to shoot from aircraft. A successful program reduces predation and/or allows prey numbers to increase, enables people to take more moose and caribou, and allows healthy populations of predators to thrive. We have healthy populations of wolves and bears all around the state, and we intend to keep it that way – always. We would not conduct predator control if there were even the slightest concern predator populations were in jeopardy.

With all due respect, Congressman Miller, you failed to do your homework. I urge you to learn more about the realities of Alaska's predator control program, and not to swallow the rhetoric of special interest advocacy groups trying to raise money for their inaccurate campaigns. In addition, I invite you to come to Alaska and see for yourself how we manage our wildlife, and meet some of the many hard-working Alaskans who rely on our predator management programs to give them access to the food they need.

Sincerely,



Sarah Palin
Governor

cc: The Honorable Ted Stevens, United States Senator
The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, United States Senator
The Honorable Don Young, United States Congressman